

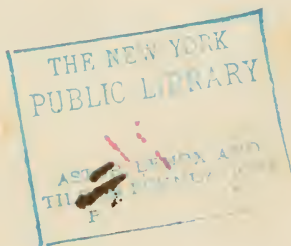
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THE

BAPTISM;

OR THE

LITTLE INQUIRER.

DESIGNED FOR THE USE OF

SABBATH SCHOOLS.

BY WILLSON JEWELL, M. D.

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AMERICAN BAPTIST PUBLICATION SOCIETY,

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THE BAPTISM;

OR, THE LITTLE INQUIRER.

CHAPTER I.

“TELL me, mother, if Mr. Edgar’s three sons, who were taken last Sabbath afternoon to the church, and sprinkled with water out of a large stone basin, have been baptized? and if they have, whether they have got new hearts? because father told us the Bible speaks of only one kind of baptism; and that is, covering the whole body with water: and I remember he said we must go and confess our sins to God, and repent, and have a new heart, before we could be baptized. I’m sure I do not know how it is; for there is Henry Edgar, who is a little baby, and cannot talk, yet he was baptized; how did he confess his sins? Indeed, I should not think he had done any sins to be sorry for. And as for

Richard, I asked him, when he told me he had been to the church to get baptized, if he had repented, and he laughed in my face, and said, 'What do you mean by repented?' You, my dear mother, have always said it was a very solemn thing to be baptized, but Richard Edgar is not solemn; he laughs, and talks, and plays, just as ever he did: do you think he has got a new heart? I do believe, mother, that we are as good children as the Edgars, and you and father I know are a great deal better than either of their parents. We have family prayers; and when I asked Richard if they had, he said no, it was enough for them to go to church and say prayers: we never go to the theatre nor to balls, but Mr. Edgar has a season ticket for the theatre, and goes every night; and Richard told me that he went to a dancing-school and to cotillon parties every Saturday evening. Now, may be, if you would take us and have us baptized, in the way the Edgars were, God would give us new hearts; oh! how I should like to have a new heart and be baptized! I don't think it is so hard a

thing to get a new heart as our teacher in the Sabbath school says it is. I am bad enough, but I know that Richard Edgar is a great deal worse than I am; and if he could receive a new heart and be baptized, I do not know what there is to prevent me."

Such was the simple but tender address which Charles Singleton made to his affectionate mother, one evening, when they were alone in the dining-room.

Mr. Singleton was a merchant extensively engaged in business in Philadelphia, where he resided with his family; and both himself and wife were members of the Baptist church. They had been consistent professors of religion for several years, and had endeavored to impress upon the minds of their children the necessity of embracing, early in life, the religion of the Savior. Their pious example was a model worthy of imitation. Their instruction, which they were from time to time in the habit of imparting to their children, was wholesome and profitable; but only when a suitable occasion presented did they attempt to enforce the principles of the Chris-

tian religion; and even then it was by easy and familiar illustrations, applied in the most affectionate manner, with gentleness and kindness, but always faithfully and prayerfully.

Family worship was observed regularly, and with much humility, in Mr. Singleton's family circle. The reading of the Word of God at such times was always followed by a short explanation from the parents, which rendered this part of the exercise more interesting and profitable; and when bowed in prayer, the exposed condition of their offspring was earnestly presented. Oh! how often would they wrestle in prayer for a blessing on their little ones; and that they themselves might receive wisdom and direction from above, to enable them to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

In addition to this Charles Singleton was a Sabbath school scholar, and at an early period of his childhood was led to the house of God, and taught by his affectionate parents to keep holy the Sabbath.

The plan of salvation was often repeated to him,—his true character in the sight of God from time to time set before him,—he was early taught to pray, and was a child of many prayers. Religious books, of the most entertaining and instructive character, were placed within his reach; he was made to feel that his home, and the company of his father and mother, possessed far greater charms than the giddy attractions in the street, or the alluring society of idle boys; so that he was quite a domestic lad.

But Charles had reached his eleventh year, and grace was a stranger to his heart; and, although this early and happy instruction must have prepared his mind for future usefulness, for obedience to parents, and for a delightful enjoyment of their society, he was still ignorant of his own condition, as the conversation addressed to his mother, related on the first page, evidently shows. True, he attended to many of the outward forms of religion—he would repeat the Lord's prayer when he went to bed at night; attend the Sabbath school and the house of God regu-

larly on the Sabbath; was quiet and attentive during family worship, and often read his Bible to his mother, because she loved to hear it read; he was, in short, a good boy. But, in the view of his parents, there was one thing needful.

We have discovered, however, that Charles was led to dwell upon the subject of conversion; and whether the thoughts that had engaged his mind concerning Richard Edgar's baptism were accompanied by the Holy Spirit, or were the mere outward effect of an understanding religiously educated, we cannot determine. This we do know,—“Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it;” and that the earliest impressions received in life are often made the pioneers to future usefulness or future dishonor.

How highly favored are all those children who have a pious father or mother to train them up in the ways of religion; to give them proper views of the character and perfections of God; to instruct them about their own dangerous situation, and teach them

how they may come to the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved. And how many, at this day, are able to look back with delight to their youthful privileges, to the instruction of faithful parents, and their uniformly pious example, or to the moral and religious training in the beautiful principles of the Gospel, which they first received in the Sabbath school; and from these seasons date their first religious impressions.

Dear reader, if you are favored with such opportunities, do not slight them; hear the language of the wise man,—“Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them.”

Charles Singleton and Richard Edgar went to the same school. Richard's parents were Episcopalians by birth, and had been educated in the observance of the forms and ceremonies of the church, but had neglected to have their three children christened, until Richard, the oldest of them, was about twelve years of age; and now, for the first

time, they had come to the conclusion, that they were not doing their duty to suffer their children, whom they loved tenderly, to grow up without baptism, or without dedicating them to the Lord; and this opinion was formed after an interview on the subject with their minister.

Accordingly, the next Sabbath afternoon was fixed on, and Mr. Edgar, his wife and their three children, accompanied by several friends, went to church; and at the conclusion of the services they approached the altar, and, from the hands of their minister, the children received what the Episcopal church call the rite of baptism, by the sprinkling of water.

The following morning, on his way to school, Richard Edgar met Charles Singleton; and as they were intimate friends at school, he told him all about the ceremony which had taken place the previous day; that he and his brothers went to church, and were led up to the altar, before all the congregation, and, after several questions put to their father and mother, the minister

sprinkled a little water in each of their faces, out of a large stone basin, and then laid his hands upon each of their heads and prayed; and that now they were members of the church, because they had been baptized; and that their father had told them they must be good children.

All this, as we have seen, was new and strange to Charles. He had never passed through any such ceremony, and he wondered how it could be that his parents, who were so anxious that he might love and serve God and become a useful member of the church, should neglect what he supposed, from Richard's account, to be the way of admittance into the church, when it was so easy. This kind of baptism he had never heard of; he had always been taught that when people were baptized they were put under the water; he did not know what to make of all this; he thought to himself how it could be, that neither his parents nor his Sabbath school teacher ever told him of this kind of baptism. He had heard of believer's baptism, but infant's baptism was a new

thing to him. He asked Richard if he believed in Jesus Christ? "Yes," he replied, "and I have to say it out of the catechism every Saturday to my mother."

Charles. And have you repented of your sins, and asked God to forgive you, and to give you a new heart?

Richard. Not I; but I believe my parents have promised to do that for me.

C. But my mother told me that if I wished to have a new heart, I must repent of my sins, and ask God to forgive me, and pray to him, through Jesus Christ, for a new heart, and then I should receive one. Have you ever repented, Richard?

R. What do you mean by repented?

C. I mean, have you ever been sorry for sin?

R. Oh, I don't know any thing about that; I'm sure I have never done any great harm; and I dare say my father and mother will answer to that for me.

C. Well, all I can tell you is, that if you have never been sorry for your sins, and asked God to forgive you, and promised not

to sin any more, I don't know how you can be baptized; for one place in the Bible says, "Repent and be baptized;" and I have seen it there. Indeed, I think if there was any place that said we might be baptized without being sorry for sin, my father or mother would have found it out before now, and would have had me baptized; for they love me, and are very much concerned about my happiness; and I know, if there could be such a thing, they would gladly take all my sins away; but they have always told me that nobody but Jesus Christ can do that.

By this time they had reached the school yard, and were here joined by several lads about their own age, to whom Richard related the whole affair, not forgetting the objections that had been made by Charles Singleton. As we might suppose, a few treated the subject rather seriously, while by far the greater number were disposed to make sport of the matter, and went away laughing.

Charles was not satisfied, and was determined not to pass over, without further inquiry, a subject which he had always been

taught was of serious importance ; and proposed to Richard to ask their teacher what he considered the right way of baptism, and who ought to be baptized. This was agreed upon ; and accordingly Charles and Richard, with several other boys who were anxious to know what their teacher would say, hurried into the schoolroom ; a privilege the boys were allowed, before the hour for commencing their studies should arrive.

As Mr. Hamilton, the teacher, was a pious man, Charles thought he should succeed now in settling this question to his satisfaction. Confident of success, he boldly went up with his companions, and stated the point in dispute, and desired the teacher to decide for them. Unhappily for our little inquirer, Mr. Hamilton was a Pedobaptist in sentiment ; that is, one who thinks that it is proper to baptize infants, and that baptism may be administered in various modes ; and he decided against him. The boys seemed rather to exult over than to pity Charles in his sad disappointment ; and he went to his seat, mortified and full of thought.

He was much astonished that his parents should have kept him in the dark upon this subject. His mind was so much disturbed that he neglected his morning exercises. At last he said to himself, "My father and mother would not deceive me, nor keep from me any thing that would add to my happiness : when I return home I will go to my mother, and get her to explain the difficulty, and will, with her assistance, examine the subject for myself."

Thus was it providential, as we shall discover by the sequel, that Charles' teacher decided against him. From this time he became an inquirer after the truth ; and we doubt not, that the previous conversation and decision were employed as the means of his hopeful conversion.

CHAPTER II.

MRS. SINGLETON was quite at a loss to know in what manner she should answer the questions her anxious boy put to her, as related in the beginning of the previous chapter.

She felt all their importance; she saw that his mind was troubled concerning these things; she was sensible it would be no easy task to give him clear views of these doctrines of the Bible, without entering extensively into the subject; and was very unwilling to engage his mind on doctrinal points, as she feared it might produce feelings contrary to those of which it had been her unceasing prayer that he might be the happy subject.

But the moment was a critical one; his mind had been singularly drawn into these inquiries, his confidence in the fidelity of his parents to promote his happiness was on the point of being destroyed and he was

anxiously waiting to see how his dear mother would settle these questions to his satisfaction. It was some time before she spoke; she desired direction from heaven how to proceed, and put up a silent petition to the throne of grace for divine wisdom.

The result of her prayerful reflections was, in view of all things, that it had become her duty to instruct her child in those matters of doctrine which had engaged his attention. She remembered that he had reached an age when the impulses of the heart are easily aroused, when the imagination is strong, and when the affections could be easily wrought upon; neither did she forget the exposure to which he was continually subjected, in his intercourse with the world, and his associates at school; but above all considerations, was she brought to this conclusion by the disposition he had manifested to be correctly informed on a subject of great importance.

Charles waited anxiously for his mother to reply: he looked very sorrowful, for fear he had given her pain by the manner in which

he had spoken, and was on the point of wishing to recal every word he had uttered, when his mother looked up and said, "My dear son, you know very well that your parents have always taken pleasure in your instruction, and their anxious wishes have been that you might love God above every thing else; and we have prayed that the Lord would bless you, and make you one of his dear children.

"We have often told you that we are not to live in this world forever; and that we cannot be happy here, nor happy in the next world, unless we have Jesus for our friend. Now, God has told us this in his precious Word, the Bible; and, moreover, he has told us we are all sinners, and that unless we love the Lord we never can come where he is. In his Word he directs us how, and bids us go to the Lord Jesus Christ, the Savior of sinners. All these things have we told you, and many more, because we love you, and do not wish to be separated from you; for we may soon die; and then, if we have loved the Lord Jesus, we shall meet in heaven, never more to be parted. But if you should

die without the love of Christ, you cannot go to heaven; and, as we trust in the Savior, and hope to have a place at the right hand of God, we should be forever removed from you. It would make us very unhappy, while we stay in this world, to think of such a separation from a dear child.

“As I have before told you, your parents are never happier than when engaged in imparting to you religious instruction: they always love to answer your questions; and I am sorry that my child should suffer the thought to enter his mind, that his father or his mother, who profess to love him, would ever keep him from the performance of any thing that would add to his happiness; or, that he should suspect they had not been as faithful and as kind to him, as any other parents had been to their children.

“The questions you have put to me this evening,” continued his mother, “are important; and I am rather pleased, than otherwise, that your mind has been led to the subject. Your parents have never thought you were old enough to understand what are

called the ordinances or the doctrines of the church, and have seldom spoken of them in your hearing, believing it sufficient to impress your mind with some of those simple precepts of the Bible, which are very plain to the youthful understanding; but as you desire to be informed on these things, I shall take some interest in attempting to explain them."

Mrs. Singleton. Your first question, I think, was, whether Mr. Edgar's children had been baptized.

C. Yes, mother, when they went to the church, and had water sprinkled on their faces, and the sign of the cross made on their foreheads.

Mrs. S. I answer, no: the New Testament speaks of one baptism only, and that is immersion: the true meaning of the word *baptize* is *to dip*, or *plunge*, or *immerse under water*; and this is admitted by learned men all over the world.

C. Where shall I find this word in the New Testament, mother? Here is the family Bible; I can soon turn to it.

Mrs. S. I will answer your question, my son; but, first of all, let me ask *you* one or two: do you recollect who is spoken of in the Bible as the forerunner, or the messenger, of the Savior?

C. Let me think;—was it John the Baptist?

Mrs. S. Yes, it was; and if you open the Bible to the third chapter of Matthew's gospel, and read from the first to the sixth verse, you will find the account recorded of what he came for; and there also you will find the word *baptize*. If you have found the passage, read aloud.

C. "1. In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, 2. And saying, Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. 3. For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. 4. And the same John had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey. 5. Then

went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan, 6. And were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins."

Mrs. S. There, that will do: now let me explain as we go along. This John the Baptist, who is spoken of, was a missionary; and, being sent of God, held his commission from the highest authority. Do you know what a missionary is?

C. Yes, mother; a missionary is one appointed to preach the Gospel to the heathen. Mr. and Mrs. Wade are missionaries in Burmah.

Mrs. S. Very well. Now, John the Baptist was a missionary, to prepare the way of the Lord Jesus Christ, whose Gospel is now being preached to almost every nation on the earth.

C. What did John the Baptist preach, mother?

Mrs. S. He preached repentance and baptism; and told the people, when they thought he was the Christ, that there would come one mightier than he was.

C. Did he mean the Savior?

Mrs. S. Yes; and he also informed them, that as he baptized with water, so Christ would baptize with the Holy Ghost.

C. But, mother, why does it not say immerse or dip?

Mrs. S. I will explain this to you. I have already told you that the true meaning of the word baptize is, *to dip*, or *plunge*. *Baptize* is the Greek word for *dip*, and has never been translated into the English language.

C. Why was not this word translated?

Mrs. S. Because King James I. of England, who ordered the translation of the Bible, now in use, to be made, in order to avoid dispute, gave such directions that this word, whenever it related to this ordinance, (with some others,) should remain untranslated, or stand in the original language.

C. What a good thing that was in the king.

Mrs. S. Not so, my son: to this circumstance we may attribute much of the diffi-

culty there is among Christians at the present day, as to the correct meaning of the word.

C. I do n't understand you, mother?

Mrs. S. Why, Charles, if King James had given no directions to the translators about this word, in all probability they would have translated the word as they did elsewhere.

C. Oh yes! now I think I understand; and we should have read, here in the sixth verse, "and were immersed of him in Jordan," instead of "baptized."

Mrs. S. You are quite right, my dear; and I have no doubt it would have prevented much unhappy argument.

C. Do tell me, mother, was this river Jordan, where John baptized, the same Jordan that empties into the Dead sea, and through which the Israelites passed on dry ground?

Mrs. S. The same: I suppose you met with the account in your Union Question book?

C. Yes, mother, we had it for our lesson last Sabbath, and our teacher told us that it was a miracle. What is a miracle, mother?

Mrs. S. A miracle is some wonderful occurrence, contrary to nature : if the water in this pitcher should in a moment be turned into wine, it would be a miracle.

C. Why, mother, would n't that be impossible ?

Mrs. S. For that reason we should call it a miracle : it would be impossible for man to effect it ; but with God "all things are possible ;" and, if you remember, the Savior performed many miracles.

C. Oh yes ! I recollect reading in the Bible at Sabbath school of one of his miracles, when he fed five thousand people in the wilderness, with seven loaves and a few fishes : was not that a miracle, mother ?

Mrs. S. Yes ; and can you tell me why it was a miracle ?

C. I think I can ; because no one but God himself could have performed so wonderful a thing. But, mother, why was Jesus Christ baptized by John ?

Mrs. S. I am pleased that you have asked me that question, as it is one of some importance to the proper understanding of

John's baptism. Christ came to John to be baptized, not that he had any sins to wash away, but that he might recommend this baptism by his own example; and as he was not ashamed to be baptized by a servant, so he expected men would not be ashamed to submit to the same baptism that he did; and if there were no other reasons, we think this alone should forever put to rest every objection to baptism.

C. Indeed, I wonder that any body would object to it, when the Savior was baptized, and directed us to follow him. But tell me, mother, is there no place in the Bible where it says that people used to get sprinkled when they wished to be baptized?

Mrs. S. No: there is not a single passage in the whole of the Scriptures to show that sprinkling water in the face was ever performed as baptism, or that it means baptism.

C. I am sure it seems very plain to me, here in the sixth verse, that when John baptized, he must have put them under the water, for it says "in Jordan;" and I do not know why he took them into the river, if he

only meant to sprinkle a little water in their faces.

Mrs. S. Nor do I, my son; but this is not the only proof we have that baptism was performed by covering the whole body with water. If you look on the map of Palestine, you will there see a little brook marked Cedron, very close to the walls of the city of Jerusalem; now I dare say if John had thought sprinkling was baptism, he would have performed the ceremony where it was most convenient to the city, instead of requiring the converts to go to the river Jordan, which was at some distance, but where there was deep water. And when Philip baptized the eunuch, it says, in the account as recorded in the eighth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, which you can turn to, and read for yourself,—

C. I know where it is, mother; now I have got it; it says, “they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water,” &c. Indeed, mother, I should think every body would

understand it. I remember our teacher was telling us who this eunuch was : he said he was a very great man, that he held an office under Queen Candace ; like the office of Treasurer to our Sabbath School Mission Society, he kept the money.

Mrs. S. Yes, my dear, he was a very influential person ; and this circumstance appears very favorable to the practice of immersion in those days, and no other way was thought to be proper ; as we know that a man of his dignity and character would never have taken the trouble to come down out of his chariot, and go into the water, and allow Philip to put him under the water, if sprinkling would have answered the same purpose ; for he had a great many servants with him, and drinking vessels, on this journey through the desert, and he could have ordered them to have brought a little water into the chariot, had it been proper.

C. I expect he wanted to be baptized in the way his Savior was.

Mrs. S. I have not the least doubt his desire was to follow the example of his Lord and Master, Jesus Christ.

C. Well, mother, when I am to be baptized, that is the way I want it done, not as the Edgars were; and I was sure that you would have told me if there had been any other way. But as there is nothing said in the Bible about sprinkling, why do so many good people use that way, and then call it baptizing?

Mrs. S. I cannot give you a better reason than the following. The Pope, in the year 1311, publicly declared that it made no difference, provided water was used in the ceremony, whether they sprinkled, or poured on water, or immersed the person about to be baptized. Either way, he said, would do very well.

C. And have they no other authority than the Pope?

Mrs. S. Yes, they have another: in the year 1643, the Parliament of England selected fifty of the most learned ministers from among the Episcopalians, Independents, and Presbyterians, to form a creed for millions of Christians. They met in the chapel of King Henry VII., and after a long and tedi-

ous debate, whether they should retain the original manner of baptizing, or establish sprinkling in its place, they agreed to put it to vote, and the assembly was equally divided; there were as many in favor of the original mode, by immersion, as there were of those in favor of sprinkling; but the chairman, or president of the assembly, who now had the decision of this question, gave his vote in favor of what he thought to be the easiest way, which was sprinkling; and you see that the mode rests on the authority of one individual.

C. What was the name of this president?

Mrs. S. His name was Lightfoot; the celebrated Dr. Lightfoot.

C. And were there no Baptists in this great meeting?

Mrs. S. Not one; they had not the privilege to be present; but they were allowed to continue the scriptural mode of baptism, by the consent of these learned divines.

C. Well, mother, I should think the Baptists are right; for whilst other Christians

baptize as the Pope told them they might, the Baptists go according to the directions of the Bible.

Mrs. S. You are correct; the former have human tradition for their authority; the latter have the command of the Savior. And I am pleased that you appear to understand so well the difference between the two forms, one of which is certainly misnamed baptism.

C. And I thank my mother that she has taken the pains to make this matter of baptism plain. I shall be able now to tell Richard Edgar that I have no wish to be baptized after the Pope's way, or any other way than the Bible directs.

Mrs. S. Very well, my dear, you can do so; and now, as the evening is far spent, and you must be tired and sleepy, we will leave the other questions until to-morrow evening.

Charles was very willing to obey his mother's wishes, and, after bidding her good night, went up to bed.

CHAPTER III

THE following evening, Charles reminded his mother of her promise to answer some other questions relating to baptism; and told her there was one thing about sprinkling that he did not understand, which was this: if sprinkling is nowhere spoken of in the Bible, why God permitted Christians to practise it instead of baptism. Mrs. Singleton replied as follows:

“Your question, my dear, is a difficult one to answer; but, difficult as it is, I will endeavor to give you an answer that may perhaps be satisfactory. You must remember that God is not only just and holy, but is forbearing and merciful; and whilst he regards strictly every irregularity in the church, and in the administration of his ordinances,—and baptism is one of them,—you bear in mind, that those who practise such irregularities are still in his hands, and

why he does not put a stop to them at once is beyond our limited knowledge. Indeed, it has not been revealed to us in the Scriptures: that is, God has not told us. While the Jews were crucifying the blessed Redeemer on Calvary, God did not prevent them, although he could have done so; yes, in a single moment of time he might have struck the Roman soldiers and the crucifiers down, as he did Saul of Tarsus. But he forbore; he wished to accomplish his own glorious purposes. He suffers many errors to exist in the church, and the day of judgment alone will reveal to us the true cause."

Charles. Is it wicked, mother, to sprinkle instead of baptize, and then call it baptism?

Mrs. Singleton. Let me tell you what the apostle James says: "To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." If those who practise sprinkling go contrary to their knowledge, then they certainly sin against the command of Christ.

C. I wish I had known all this when Mr. Hamilton told the boys that sprinkling was baptism.

Mrs. S. What would you have done, my son?

C. Why, I would have answered him just as you have answered me; and I know he would have seen that he was wrong.

Mrs. S. Indeed, my dear, it would not have been very proper in a child like you, to presume to contradict, or to hold a debate with your teacher. I would much prefer that you should have handed him the tract, published by the Baptist General Tract Society, called "The Scripture Guide to Baptism," as I think he would be unable to make any reply to the able and convincing arguments therein contained.

C. Shall I buy that tract now, mother, and give it to Mr. Hamilton?

Mrs. S. Not unless the subject of baptism should come up again in school.

C. Oh, I do hope something may be said there about it; and then I shall show them all that I am right. I wish to ask you, mother, why John is called John the Baptist?

Mrs. S. Because he was the first to practise believers' baptism.

C. Why do you call it *believers'* baptism?

Mrs. S. We have Scripture authority for calling it by that name; and you will be able to see for yourself, if you turn again to the eighth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, and read the thirty-sixth and thirty-seventh verses.

C. I have found it, mother; and it says, "And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water. And the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest.

"And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."

Mrs. S. Very well; do you understand it now?

C. Yes, mother, I think I do; before any body can be baptized they must believe the Gospel with all their heart. Now I think I know why it is called *believers'* baptism.

Mrs. S. And this is the best answer I can give you to another question you proposed.

C. What was that, mother,—whether the

little baby, that could not talk, ought to have been baptized, because it could not confess its sins and believe?

Mrs. S. Yes.

C. I was thinking about this; but I remember to have heard somewhere that the Savior took little babies in his arms and said—what did he say, mother?

Mrs. S. He said, “Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven.”

C. Yes, that is it. Now, I was thinking, mother, if that does not mean to have them baptized.

Mrs. S. Certainly not, my dear; Christ never baptized any one; therefore he could not have called them to baptism. Nor is there a word said about baptism in the whole passage: he took them up in his arms, and gave them his blessing, and that is all we are told he did.

C. Then I suppose father and you do not give us to the Lord, as Mr. and Mrs. Edgar did their children;—do you?

Mrs. S. I hope we do, but in another

way; we endeavor to comply with the directions of Scripture, and “bring you up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord,” and that is all God has required of us concerning you; and if, with the blessing of God, we are able to do that faithfully, we discharge the most important duty enjoined upon us, and leave the rest to God.

C. Why, mother, Mr. Hamilton said something, the other day, about the children of believers being holy children; and I know he said it was in the Bible.

Mrs. S. Hand me the Bible: I think I can find the passage to which he had allusion. This is it, in 1st Corinthians, seventh chapter, and at the fourteenth verse. I will read it. “The unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; else were your children unclean, but now they are holy.”

C. Ah! mother, it says they are holy, and why cannot holy persons be baptized?

Mrs. S. Stop, stop, Charles; not so fast; let me explain: come, read the chapter, and let us understand what it is written for.

The church at Corinth had a great deal of trouble to decide whether it was right for a member of the church to live with one who was not a member, as husband and wife.

C. What caused all this trouble, mother?

Mrs. S. Why, my dear, it is possible that there were Jewish teachers in this church, and according to their ancient customs it was unlawful or unholy.

C. Does unholy and unlawful mean the same thing?

Mrs. S. According to the Jewish system of laws it did, and that is the meaning of the word here, unlawful; that is, it was unholy or unlawful for a Jew to keep company with, or eat with a Gentile, as all the Gentiles were said to be unclean; and this being the case, these Jews, who had been converted to the religion of the Savior, and joined the church at Corinth, thought the same law should govern the members of this church in their marriage relations: but there were so many difficulties in the way that they at last agreed to refer the subject to Paul, and wrote a letter to him.

C. Was this the same Paul who was brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, a great lawyer?

Mrs. S. The very same; and no doubt the people had great confidence in his opinion, as he was a very learned man, and skilled in the law.

C. And what answer did Paul write to them? I long to know.

Mrs. S. Why, the chapter before you contains his answer; and he tells them there, that as they were united, husband and wife, by the laws of God, before they made a profession of religion, or were married to unbelievers, they may lawfully dwell together, and that their children would be lawful children.

C. Well, mother, suppose both the father and mother believed; as their children were born, would they be believers too?

Mrs. S. By no means; as well might you say that because your parents are members of the Baptist church, so you are born a member of the church.

C. Then I am no better off than those children who have very wicked parents.

Mrs. S. In the sight of God you are not better; and this we know from the Bible. Can you tell me who wrote the book of Psalms?

C. Yes: David, he who killed the giant Goliath.

Mrs. S. Very well; this good man said, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity."

C. Was this saying he was born a sinner?

Mrs. S. Yes: that is just what he intended to say. Now David was the son of a very pious man, whose name was Jesse, and from whom came the best of the Hebrew kings; but they were all sinners. I will tell you, my son, how you are better off than many children, who have not pious parents. You are taught to love God, and to serve him; you are sent to the Sabbath school, and this is a great privilege; and you have good books to read, and you never hear improper language at home; and your parents

always take pleasure in giving you instruction.

C. I hope I am thankful for these things ; but I was all along thinking that I was a great deal better than some boys, because my parents were members of the church ; but I know I am not, from what you have told me. And I don't care about Richard Edgar's having been baptized, because he was not baptized as the Bible directs. Mother, I should like to know, if, when persons are baptized, they always go to heaven.

Mrs. S. No, my dear ; none of us would ever reach heaven if we depended on baptism to save us ; nor is baptism necessary to save the soul.

C. Then why are people so anxious to be baptized ?

Mrs. S. Because it is an ordinance of the New Testament.

C. What is meant by ordinance ?

Mrs. S. It means appointment, and the appointments or ordinances of God are his commandments, his rules and directions how we must worship him.

C. When I say the Lord's prayer, mother, is that an ordinance?

Mrs. S. Yes; prayer is an ordinance; it is one of his commands.

C. Well, tell me, if baptism does not save people, in what way does it do them good?

Mrs. S. To be baptized is to follow the command of the Savior, to be obedient to him; it is the answer of a good conscience towards God; and all who love Christ, and desire to keep his commandments, will be baptized: therefore it does them good to think that they are obeying the Savior.

C. Then I think there is no use in baptizing little children; for they do not love the Savior, nor keep his commandments.

Mrs. S. No; for how can they, when they have not heard of him?

C. Then our Savior did not command infants to be baptized?

Mrs. S. No; he left no such command, nor is there a single example of the kind in the whole Bible.

C. Well, then, if there is nothing said about the sprinkling of little children in the

Bible, who commanded Mr. Edgar to have his children sprinkled?

Mrs. S. I cannot tell you, unless their minister did.

C. Now I think it must have been him; for Richard told me the minister took tea at their house, and the very next Sabbath they were sprinkled; and I dare say they talked all about it.

Mrs. S. It may be possible, as the authority for infant sprinkling originated with the clergy.

C. Can you tell me, mother, why the clergy had children baptized?

Mrs. S. Yes, I think I can; many of the ancients believed that baptism was necessary to save the individual, and with this belief the clergy directed all children to be baptized.

C. But you have just told me that baptism does not save any person.

Mrs. S. No, it does not: it is only a command, and, as such, should be obeyed; and as little children cannot understand, therefore they cannot obey.

C. I wonder that any body would want to baptize little children, if it does them no good; indeed, I don't think Richard Edgar, although you told me he was old enough to know better, cared much about it, nor did he know why he was baptized, only as his father told him.

Mrs. S. Richard is certainly old enough to know and to act better; and I hope my son will never think lightly of so solemn an act.

C. I hope I never shall. Father and you always told me it was very solemn, and that is what made me think so very strange of it, when Richard Edgar told the boys all about it, and made some of them laugh.

Here the conversation between Charles Singleton and his mother was interrupted by the ringing of the front-door bell, and by the introduction of one of the neighbors, who remained until so late an hour, that Mrs. Singleton told Charles he had better go to bed, and endeavor to pray to his Heavenly Father that the conversation they had had might be a blessing to him, and he become

a proper subject for baptism. Charles did not require to be told a second time, but obeyed his mother at once, as he was always pleased to do; and, thanking her for her kindness in answering his questions, gave her a kiss, bid her good night, and went quietly to bed.

CHAPTER IV.

SEVERAL days had elapsed before an opportunity offered for Charles Singleton, our youthful inquirer, and his mother, to renew a subject in which they had both become so much interested. One evening, however, Charles, finding himself alone with his mother, proposed to her the following question :

Charles. Will you tell me, my dear mother, what is meant by getting a new heart? for you remember I asked you whether Richard Edgar had a new heart.

Mrs. Singleton. Yes; but do you think, after all I have told you on this subject, that he has got a new heart?

C. No, indeed I do not.

Mrs. S. Why do you think so, my child?

C. Sure, mother, he had never confessed any of his sins to God, nor was he ever sorry for them. You know he told me so; and I

do not remember to have seen any change in him. He was as lively and foolish the next day as ever he had been; and he told me he never prayed, and that they had no prayer even in the family; and he said he went to cotillions, because his mother thought it was good exercise for children. Now, with all these, how could he have had a new heart? Father has often said to me, that there must be a change in our way of living and in our behavior, and that we must go and confess our sins before God, if we would have a new heart.

Mrs. S. My dear child, I think you appear to know almost, as well as I could inform you, what is necessary to obtain a new heart.

C. Oh, dear mother! I knew all this long ago; but yet, after I have done all these things, still I want to know how I am to get this new heart; for our Sabbath school teacher told us that our hearts were compared in the Bible to hearts of stone; and that when we felt sorry for sin, and promised to try and sin no more, God would

take away these stony hearts, and give us hearts of flesh.

Mrs. S. Now, my son, I can perceive where your difficulty lies, in this matter; and I will endeavor to explain what getting a new heart is, and make it plain to your mind. Give me your attention. When your father bought the house we live in, it was a very old one. The roof was so much decayed that it leaked in several places; the window-panes were loose, and the sashes broken; some of the doors would not shut close, some had the hinges broken, and on others the locks were out of repair; it was dangerous to ascend the stairs; the steps at the front door were of wood, and were defaced and decayed; the paint both on the outside and on the inside of the house was worn off in every direction; the mantel-pieces were all old-fashioned; the parlor chimneys smoked, and the fences around the yard were ready to tumble down, as the posts were giving way.

C. Dear me; I wonder that father would buy such an old house; I suppose, though, he must have got it very cheap?

Mrs. S. No, indeed; he paid a very large sum of money for it.

C. Why did he do that, mother? he might have built a new one for the same money.

Mrs. S. So he could; but I must tell you, as you have heard before, that your father was very much attached to this spot. It had been the residence of his ancestors for many years; he was born in this house; and he seemed to love the very ground on which it was built. And he had made up his mind, several years before your uncle Henry offered it for sale, that he would be the purchaser, if ever it should be sold; and when business called your uncle to the south to reside, your father bought from him this house. Well, he sent for Mr. Lesley, the carpenter, to examine it, and he found the walls in a perfect state of preservation; they were good and firm, and the timbers all sound. He advised your father not to pull down, but modernize the house, on the old frame; and your father took his advice. He let the walls stand, and altered the doors and windows, put new steps of white marble to the front door, re-

paired the fences, had the sashes newly glazed, placed marble mantels where the wooden ones had been, set grates in the fire-places in the parlors, had new locks placed on some of the doors and repaired others, altered the staircase, had folding-doors made between the parlors, put a new roof on the house, had the outside and the inside handsomely painted; and by the time all these repairs and changes had been made, you could not have told that it was the same house, it had been so completely renewed and so thoroughly changed; it had every appearance of a new house.

C. But, mother, all this must have cost a great deal of money.

Mrs. S. Yes, it cost him a large sum of money before he finished the work; but he does not regret all the expense he went to, as he still resides in the family mansion.

C. Yes, mother; but have you not forgot about the new heart? you were to tell me what getting a new heart was. Is there any thing like it in what you have been telling me?

Mrs. S. Yes, my dear; and this is like

the way in which God changes or renews the heart of man. "God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Our Heavenly Father saw the wickedness and depravity of the heart of man, but he loved him and could not bear to give him up. He was the workmanship of his own hands, which he knew was good; but he had become corrupted; the thoughts, the words and deeds of men were wicked; yes, their "hearts were deceitful and desperately wicked;" but he could not forsake him; and yet, he saw that man could never come where he was, unless his soul were purchased by the sacrifice of blood; and what blood should it be? the blood of bulls or the blood of goats? oh no! but the blood of the Son of God!! Think, think, my child, at what an incalculable price our Heavenly Parent purchased our souls, and delivered them from going down to everlasting destruction;—the life blood of his only Son! Yes; and it was freely given up. Jesus Christ came forward, and graciously offered

to shed his precious blood, as a price for poor sinners ! And God was satisfied ; for he beheld in the death of a Son, dearly beloved, an acceptable sacrifice.

C. Oh, mother, why does not every body love that Savior who died to save us ?

Mrs. S. Because they love sin better, preferring the service of Satan.

C. Indeed, mother, I will try to love this Savior ; but may be he did not die for me.

Mrs. S. Oh yes, my son ; if you feel that you have sinned against God, the price has been paid for you too : he died for all, who feel their need of a Savior. There is nothing that could give your mother more pleasure than to hear you say you will try to love the Lord Jesus Christ ; and in doing this you will love to think about what he has done for you ; and will love and obey your parents, and try to love every body, and avoid the company of bad boys, shun every vice and every temptation, and read your Bible more, and feel sorry for sin, and hate it, and pray to God, for Christ's sake to for-

give you. If you do these things seriously, you will feel that you have a new heart. Then you will *think* differently from what you ever have done ; you will *appear* differently to every body about you ; what you once loved of a worldly nature you will then hate ; your manners will be changed ; you will be kind, and gentle, and benevolent ; you will have a grateful heart for all God's mercies ; you will not only pray, but *love* to pray ; you will love the people of God, and the house of God ; it will be a delightful place to you,—you will never leave it without regret, and never return to it without joy : in short, your whole nature will be changed, and you will be a new child in Christ Jesus. And as the house, which underwent so much repair, was still the same family mansion, so you would be, with all this change, the same Charles Singleton.

C. And this, my dear mother, is having a new heart ! oh dear, how delightful it must be ! Now I can tell why you said so much about father's house, because it was like the getting of a new heart.

Mrs. S. It gives me pleasure, Charles, that you understand the illustration I have given you. Mr. Wilson was correct, too, when he told you the Bible compared the sinner's heart to stone. A stone, you know, is hard, and cannot feel; it is dead matter; therefore perfectly insensible to every thing. Just so is the sinner's heart—insensible, not even feeling sorrow for the sufferings that the Savior endured, when he passed through the agonizing and cruel scenes in the garden of Gethsemane; his condemnation at Pilate's bar, and his crucifixion on Calvary. But God has power to break the heart of the hardest sinner, that is, to make the sinner feel sensible of his sinfulness and danger; and then he fulfils his promise to give him a new heart, a heart of flesh,—a soft heart, a tender and feeling heart.

C. Why, mother, how plain it is to me; I wonder I could not have seen it so before: and how much it is like father's repairing the old mansion-house. The price he paid for it, because he always loved the place of his birth, is very much like God's purchasing

our souls, because he loved us. There were a great many alterations made: can you compare them to any thing in the change of heart?

Mrs. S. I can; the renewed sinner has new thoughts, new feelings, new wishes, new companions, new pleasures, new songs, a new spirit, and, as the apostle says, "walks in newness of life." "Old things have passed away: behold, all things are become new." And all these may be compared to the changes that were made in the house.

C. So they may; and like the house, too, the sinner has become so changed, that scarcely any body that was once acquainted with him knows him now.

Mrs. S. And yet, my son, it is the same house that was once out of repair, and going to destruction, and the same sinner whose "heart despised reproof," and whose pathway led down to the chambers of hell. My son, your parents' constant prayer is, that it may please your Heavenly Father to change *your* heart, give you an interest in the Redeemer, and save you by his grace.

Charles was delighted with the explanation his mother had given about the change of heart. Like many other young persons, and indeed some older ones too, who have heard that before they can be baptized as the Savior directed they must experience a change of heart, he was waiting or looking for some wonderful occurrence to take place in his *heart* alone, and which would be made apparent to his sight : perhaps he expected a miracle to be performed ; or perhaps he thought of undergoing some dreadful operation, before his heart could be changed ; or, may be, he was ready to exclaim, with Nicodemus, “ How can a man be born when he is old ? ”

But now it was otherwise with our little inquirer. He had become satisfied as to what a change of heart, or conversion to God, consisted in ; he was well convinced that he had not experienced this change, and that he could not effect it himself ; that the power was of God, and that this power, when it operated, renewed the thoughts, words, actions and feelings of the heart. As he had

told his mother, he was very well satisfied that the Edgars had not been baptized in the way the Savior directed; and that if they had been he was quite sure they had never received new hearts. And although Mr. Hamilton had decided, before the boys in school, that they were baptized in the right way, and were proper subjects for baptism, Charles was now determined, that if ever he set out to follow the footsteps of the Redeemer, he would take the Bible for his guide, as to the correct way. And our desire is, that all who read that Holy Book may be enabled to draw from it the same conclusions that we find Charles Singleton has done, and be led to think seriously of the importance of following the Savior in all his commandments.

CHAPTER V.

It will not appear surprising if we say, that the subject of conversation, introduced into the preceding chapters, between our youthful inquirer and his pious mother, was much to his advantage. From this time he became more thoughtful, read his Bible with more attention, seemed pleased when the Sabbath morning came, that he might attend the Sabbath school and the ordinances of God's house; and was observed by his parents to have greater diligence in all things, than he before possessed.

Several weeks had elapsed after the last conversation, when Charles Singleton inquired of his mother, one Lord's day evening, what kind of a meeting an experience meeting was; for, as he told her, he had heard Mr. Smith, their pastor, give notice in the morning, that one of these meetings would take place on the evening of the next day, in the

meeting-house. His mother informed him, that these meetings were for the purpose of hearing such persons as feel it their duty to be baptized and to connect themselves with the church, relate their religious feelings or impressions, or what they think they have experienced of the operations of the Spirit of God on their hearts ; and they are called experience meetings.

C. Can *any body* attend these meetings?

Mrs. S. Yes ; they are open for all who have any desire to be present.

C. Does the minister know who wish to relate their experience ?

Mrs. S. Oh yes ; such persons always wait upon him previously, and they have much religious conversation ; and when he is satisfied that they are proper subjects to come before the church, he notifies the officers or deacons, or the visiting committee, and they inquire into the moral character of the candidates ; and if they find these without blemish, their names are mentioned to the church, as proper persons for admission.

C. And have they to stand up, and tell all about the state of their mind?

Mrs. S. It may not be required of them to rise; but they are expected to give a short history of their first religious impressions, the particular circumstance which first led them to think on the subject of religion, their view of themselves as sinners, their ideas of God and his character, how they expect to be saved and through whom, the evidence they have of a change of heart, and to give their views of baptism and the Lord's supper.

C. How I should love to go to one of these meetings.

Mrs. S. Well, Charles, if our lives and health are spared, you shall go to-morrow evening, as I expect the meeting will be more interesting than usual; for Mr. Watson's apprentice, Samuel, who is not much older than yourself, is expected to be one of the candidates.

C. What! Sam. Rittenhouse? why, mother, he belongs to our class in the Sabbath school. Well, now, I did not think he was

going to be baptized; though he is always talking about religion.

Mrs. S. Well, my son, it is very commendable in him. And it is one evidence that he must love religion; for whatever we love we are very apt to talk the most about; and the Scriptures say, "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." And if you desire to be honored of God, and please your parents, and be happy, you will endeavor to follow the example of Samuel Rittenhouse.

C. Why, mother, if I were to try ever so hard, I could not talk as he does; for our teacher says he knows he will become a minister. But now I think I had best go to bed, because I want to rise early, and learn my lessons for the day after to-morrow, for if I go with you in the evening I shall have no time then.

And, saying this, he kissed his mother and retired.

At an earlier hour than usual, on the following evening, Mr. and Mrs. Singleton, with Charles, left home for the contemplated

meeting, as they knew that unless they went early they would be unable to get a convenient seat for hearing; for the house, on such occasions, was generally crowded; and now they were particularly anxious to be able to hear, on account of their son Charles. But although they were full half an hour before the time of meeting, the house was filled. However, they went up near to the pulpit, and were fortunate enough to procure two seats, within two pews of where the candidates were seated. Mr. Singleton placed his wife and son in these seats, and took his own on the pulpit stairs. The exercises were very solemn. There were ten individuals, each of them prepared to say, before the crowded assembly, "Come and hear, and I will tell you what the Lord hath done for my soul."

Samuel Rittenhouse, to whom we have already alluded, was the youngest of the number. The services commenced by singing and prayer, followed by a brief explanatory address, and a few words of exhortation from the paster to those present. After

which, he affectionately called upon each candidate to rise, and, in as clear and distinct a manner as possible, tell to all assembled how bountifully the Lord had dealt with them ; and not to be afraid, for they were in the midst of their friends. One after another they arose, and related the religious exercises of their minds, which were full of interest, and which created a deep feeling throughout the assembly.

When Samuel stood forth, quite a child in appearance, the reader may imagine that, under circumstances so interesting, he at once engaged the undivided attention of every person in the house, and became an object of anxious solicitude. None seemed to feel more deeply than Charles Singleton. There was some reason for his feeling thus deeply. He saw one, about his own age, a member of the same class in the Sabbath school, stand up, in the presence of God and all the people, and tell of a precious Savior, and that he was ready to devote his days to the service of God ! Charles sighed, and was distressed to think that he was not prepared to

do as Samuel was about to do, and almost made up his mind to set out, in good earnest, to serve God and win the prize of eternal life.

The pastor encouraged Samuel, in the most affectionate and endearing manner, to speak loud enough for all to hear : accordingly, with a clear, yet child-like voice, and in a very audible manner, he spoke as follows : “ My first convictions for sin were felt at my sister’s baptism. While I was standing at the water, seeing the candidates baptized, I thought that I should like to be baptized ; but then I remembered that my heart must be changed, before I should be prepared. I went away with these feelings, and I could not get them out of my mind. I went to my bedroom and tried to pray ; but my prayers seemed all in vain, as I could not obtain that change which I thought was necessary. However, I continued to pray daily for one week ; but what with Satan’s temptations, and the vain pleasures of the world, which were too strong for me, I enjoyed no satisfaction, and continued to go astray. I soon

made up my mind, however, that I would pray every day, as I had been taught to do, and that I would endeavor to lead a different kind of life; that I would read my Bible oftener; attend the house of God and the Sabbath school more regularly, and try to keep the Sabbath-day holy; and that by doing this I should experience religion when I grew older; that now the temptations of the world were too strong for me to overcome, and that there was time enough for me, who was so young, to make a profession of religion.

“I went on, in this kind of indifference, for nearly two months; when, one evening, meeting with a young companion, he invited me to accompany him to a Methodist class meeting, and I agreed to go. We had not been in long before one of the brethren came to me and asked me if I had religion. I said, ‘No, sir.’ He then inquired if I desired to have it. I told him that I did: he said, if I would go on my knees, he would kneel with me, and would pray for me, and that I must pray too, and I should be sure to get religion

before I left the house. We kneeled down, and he prayed for me; and I tried to pray that I might enjoy comfort and peace in believing. But I found it was all in vain. I went home, much troubled; and from this time I began to think that if I did not feel myself to be a sinner in the sight of God, I could not have religion. I often went by myself, and prayed that the Lord would enable me, by his Spirit, to feel myself a lost sinner; and it was not long before God heard my prayer, and caused me to feel my sins a great burden to me. Oh! when I found what a sinner I had been, I thought to myself, 'Why, I am too great a sinner ever to be saved by his grace.' But I continued to pray; and, finding no relief, I thought I must give up, that there was no mercy for me, and that I could not be saved. Then it was that these words came to my relief:

"But if you meet with troubles and trials on the way,
Cast all your cares on Jesus, and do n't forget to pray."

This encouraged me to go on. After several attempts to pray, a flood of tears poured from my eyes, and I seemed to find comfort.

I now read the Bible constantly, and prayed every day, and I met with many precious promises; but I could not yet lay hold of them. I often conversed with Christian friends, who encouraged me, and told me how good it was to serve the Lord when young, and to give my heart to him in my youthful days.

“My father was a pious man, and often told me to fear the Lord, as it was the beginning of wisdom. He sent me to a Sabbath school, and instructed me to keep the Sabbath-day holy; but before I was ten years old it pleased the Lord to take him from me. Through the mercy of God, who has promised to be a father to the fatherless, he caused my lot to be cast in a pious family, where I had many advantages. They took great pains to teach me the fear of the Lord every day; they gave me pious advice, and set me a religious example, and prayed for me, that I might give up my heart to the Lord. But it seemed as if I could not; I thought I was too great a sinner ever to be saved.

“Thus the time passed on with me until last Sabbath morning, when I prayed that, if it was the will of the Lord, the day might not pass without my conversion. I took to the reading of the Scriptures, and found some comfort. I was reading that portion of the forty-sixth Psalm, where it says, ‘God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble;’ and it gave me hope; for I thought I could go to the Lord, and make him my refuge in trouble; and these words of the forty-seventh Psalm caused me to rejoice: ‘O, clap your hands, all ye people, shout unto God with the voice of triumph;’ for I did think the Lord would grant me pardon on that day, and then I could clap my hands, and rejoice with his people for his mercy.

“I went to the Sabbath school, with very solemn feelings, and then to the house of God. I sat down, and took up my Bible, and read. During the sermon the minister repeated this text, ‘He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved;’ and from these words I found peace. At the close of the sermon the minister gave notice that all who

felt it their duty to be baptized should come forward, when the congregation was dismissed, and give him their names. I felt that, with the help of the Lord, I was ready to be baptized, and, with others, went up to the desk, and gave him my name; since which I have enjoyed much of the presence of the Lord.”*

He was asked why he desired baptism. He replied, “Because Christ was baptized, setting us the example, and he bids us follow his footsteps.” He was also asked by the pastor, through whom he expected to be saved; he answered, “Through the blood of Christ.” When asked if he had any need of constant prayer, now that he was about to join the church, he replied, “Oh, yes.” When asked why, he said, “Because I am a sinner;” thus giving clear evidence that he had a saving knowledge of regeneration, and his own unworthiness as a sinner. After a few more questions he was desired to take

* This experience was taken down word for word as it was related by a lad, fourteen years of age, in the New Market Street meeting-house, Philadelphia, in October, 1834.

his seat. Oh, how Charles Singleton cried, he was so overcome; and many an eye, that night, wept freely at the simple but affecting recital this child had given of his feelings and exercises.

After all the candidates had related their experience in religion, several verses of the hymn, "Jesus, my all, to heaven is gone," &c., were sung; and it being a late hour, the congregation was dismissed. The candidates retired into the lecture-room. The church remained organized, and proceeded to act upon their acceptance as members, in the usual way. After this the candidates were called in, and the pastor told them he had the pleasure to say that the church had unanimously agreed to receive them into her fellowship, after baptism, of the time and place of which notice would be given from the pulpit. The meeting then broke up.

Charles had very little to say on his return home that evening. It was late; he was tired, and soon went to bed. All the next day, while at home, he appeared very solemn, and several times his mother found him read-

ing his Bible. The services of the experience meeting, and the narrative that his little Sabbath school friend had given, made a strong impression on his youthful heart: his parents saw his anxiety and blessed God for it. The next evening Charles came to his mother, and begged her to pray that he might be converted. They knelt together, and Mrs. Singleton poured out a mother's heart to the Almighty, that her dear boy might soon become the happy subject of converting grace. When they arose from their knees, his mother took his hand, and they sat down and had a pleasant, and we hope a profitable conversation on religion.

CHAPTER VI.

CHARLES SINGLETON was so delighted that his parents had taken him to the experience meeting, that for several days he could scarcely think of any thing else; and he watched every opportunity, when he saw that his mother was disengaged, to talk with her about the meeting. He told her he never had such solemn feelings on any occasion before: and that he was sure, when Richard Edgar was sprinkled, he knew nothing about those exercises which Samuel Rittenhouse had told of, at the meeting. “Will his baptism soon take place, mother?”

Mrs. Singleton. I understand it will take place at eight o’clock on next Saturday morning.

Charles. Why, mother, what makes them choose such an early hour? I should think it would be very inconvenient for a great many to attend

Mrs. S. I have no doubt it will be; but when the baptism takes place in the river they are obliged to regulate the time by the state of the tides, it being most convenient to baptize when the tide is up, on account of having a better shore and safer bottom.

C. Then I suppose it is high tide at eight o'clock;—and shall I go with you to the baptism, mother?

Mrs. S. Yes, my dear; it has been my wish you should; that as you have heard what believers' baptism is, you may see it put in practice.

Nothing could have given Charles more pleasure than this information: he thanked his mother again and again, and engaged to be a very good boy, and learn his lessons well, and try to serve God. The day for the baptism arrived; and as eight o'clock in the morning had been fixed upon, on account of the tide's suiting, it was necessary to partake of an early breakfast. Besides, the baptism was to take place on the banks of the Schuylkill river, and the Singletons would have full three miles to ride. Charles was

awake at the dawn of day : he had passed an uneasy night, for his thoughts of the baptism had so bewildered his mind as to disturb his sleep. No sooner did the sun begin to gild the eastern horizon than the anxious boy arose and dressed himself. As Mrs. Singleton had given directions the evening before, the servants were up very early, and when Charles came down stairs had breakfast on the table. His anxiety almost amounted to impatience for the arrival of the carriage ; and no sooner had he finished his breakfast than away he went to the front door to watch for its appearance. In a few minutes he came running back to say that the carriage was at the door. This was a happy day to Charles. He had been looking forward to it with intense interest, and it could be perceived that there was more in his anxiety than mere childish curiosity. Yes, although but a child, he was a sinful one, and already did he begin to feel his neglect of the Savior. The path of duty had been faithfully set before him by his pious parents, and daily did they present his case to God at the throne of grace ; and

we doubt not but their petitions had been heard, and were now about to be answered.

All things being ready, Mr. and Mrs. Singleton, with Charles, entered the carriage, and Mr. Singleton gave the coachman directions to drive into Market street, for Miss Mary Jones, one of the candidates, as they had promised her a conveyance to the place of baptism. Charles was very much pleased with this arrangement, as he expected there would be some interesting conversation on the way, about religion, and this was a subject in which of late he had taken delight. On their arrival at Miss Jones', she, with her attendant, a member of the church, was in readiness. Charles was all expectation; and eagerly caught up every word that fell from their lips. Mr. Singleton, who was a man of much piety, did not suffer the time to be passed unprofitably; he gave the young convert a word of exhortation, and encouraged her to faithfulness in the Christian race, and pointed her to the prize, a glorious inheritance among the saints, at the right hand of God. He inquired if her mind was comfortable, in

view of the solemn dedication she was about to make. She replied, "Quite comfortable; my clouds of darkness and fear have all left me, and the Lord has strengthened me; I have joy and peace in believing, and my desire is, to be buried with Christ by baptism into death, and serve my Redeemer and my God." She appeared very happy. Mr. Singleton remarked "that it was a great cross she was going to take up, and required much self-denial;" "Yes," she said, "I glory in the shame, and joyfully embrace the cross;" and then repeated these favorite lines—

"To bear his name, his cross to bear,
Our highest honor this;
Who nobly suffers now for him
Shall reign with him in bliss."

During her exercises of mind she had had doubt as to the necessity of baptism by immersion. Mr. Singleton inquired whether her views were now clear as to the proper mode of baptism. "Yes, clear as the sun at noonday," she replied; "and when I reflect that the Redeemer himself travelled from Galilee to Jordan, and submitted to this ordi-

nance, he who had no sins to wash away, it furnishes my mind with sacred respect for a glorious institution, which I delight to honor, and feel it a privilege to observe."

We have already said that the place selected for the baptism was on the margin of the Schuylkill river. And notwithstanding the hour was very early, and it was inconvenient for many persons to attend on this day, which was Saturday, yet, for half an hour or more before the appointed time, the anxious spectators were to be seen assembling in numbers, and selecting, for themselves and their friends, those places from which they could best view the administration of the ordinance. The site chosen on this baptismal occasion was really beautiful; a gravelly shore extended for some distance both up and down the river; the slope to the water's edge was gradual; behind this shore there arose a green bank, about six feet in height, with here and there a ledge of projecting rock. Beyond this, again, were several towering sycamores, which seemed to bend with sacred reverence over the spot, and to afford a delightful shade.

The whole shore, the green bank, and the shelving rocks, as the appointed hour drew nigh, were entirely lined with spectators; and even the branches of the trees around gave fair opportunity for a number of adventurous boys to witness the immersion. At a little distance off the shore were to be seen several boats, crowded with men and boys, from the neighboring vessels, led by curiosity to see the sight.

Our party had by this time reached the place of baptism, having first left Miss Jones and her attendant at a house in the neighborhood, where the candidates changed their dress. As Mr. Singleton was well known and esteemed by many present, he soon found room enough for his wife and son, where they would have an excellent view of the ordinance, and be within hearing. The opposite shore echoed back the loud hum of many voices, and now and then was heard the laugh of some thoughtless sinner present. At length, distant strains of vocal music came sweeping softly by; the delightful sound seemed to approach, and then, as the wind which bore it along

lulled, would recede again: "Listen, mother," said Charles; "I hear it again; yes, they are coming." In a few moments more the little band made its appearance, winding with slow and solemn step round a turn in the road. The busy hum of voices ceased, the thoughtless laugh was silenced into respect, and every eye was directed to those who were advancing. And now could be distinctly heard, as they sweetly sang the words of the beautiful and appropriate hymn,

"His track I see, and I'll pursue," &c.

How solemn the procession, how affecting the occasion! Here were a few, from the multitude, who were about to follow the footsteps of their ascended Lord; they were accompanied by the administrator, who was the pastor of the church, the deacons, and several friends. It was altogether an imposing spectacle; many eyes shed tears, some for joy, and others they knew not why, as they beheld the candidates approach, with holy boldness, the liquid grave.

"Mother," said Charles, in a tremulous

voice, "I wish Richard Edgar was here, and his father and mother, and Mr. Hamilton."

"What do you wish that for, my son?" asked his mother.

"Why, mother," replied Charles, "that they might see how our Savior was baptized in Jordan, and learn the way in which he commanded all who repent of their sins to be baptized; indeed, mother, I do n't think they would ever wish to call sprinkling baptism any more, or to baptize little babies, who do n't know when they are baptized."

His mother said to him, "I wish, my son, they were here; for they would behold an impressive scene; but I am afraid their prejudices in favor of infant sprinkling are too strongly confirmed to be removed, unless God, in his infinite goodness, should show them their error."

The procession was moving on; and when they reached the water's edge an appropriate address was made to the assembled multitude, by the administrator, which was followed by a suitable and fervent prayer, that God would bless and sanctify the ordinance to all present.

The administrator then walked into the water, and having ascertained the depth to which it would be proper to venture, he returned, and leading one of the candidates by the hand into the stream, repeated the memorable words as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, on the occasion of the baptism of the eunuch by Philip,—“And they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him.” Having reached the proper depth, and turning the face of the candidate towards the shore, and grasping firmly the upper part of the dress, near the collar, with the right hand, and taking securely in his left her clasped hands, (this candidate being a female,) he said, “My sister, on a profession of your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, I solemnly baptize you into the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost;” then let her gently down beneath the yielding waves, and raised her as gently up again, and finished the sacred rite by saying, “Amen.” No sooner was this done, than the whole crowd burst out into one chorus of rejoicing,

“Glory, honor, praise, and power,
Be unto the Lamb forever,” &c.;

and they continued to sing until the candidate and administrator reached the shore. In the same manner the whole number were, in succession, immersed. The sight, from beginning to end, was majestic and impressive; and notwithstanding the number of persons assembled, the greatest order and solemnity prevailed throughout.

When Samuel Rittenhouse was led into the baptismal stream, to follow the footsteps of his Savior, there was a moment of breathless excitement, and it seemed as if a united whisper of wonder and surprise passed around the crowd, “dear little fellow,” “sweet boy,” “how composed,” “what a look of holy resignation,” “what joy animates his countenance,” “O, what an example for those who are older!” and these expressions were indeed appropriate, his whole appearance being calculated to produce feelings of sorrow, joy, and surprise. As this young disciple entered the swelling flood, he gazed upon the wondering crowd, and would appear to say,

“Through floods and flames, if Jesus lead,
I’ll follow where he goes ;
Hinder me not, shall be my cry,
Though earth and hell oppose.”

Charles Singleton, in the mean time, was no careless observer of the scene that passed before him ; and this was the time when his anxiety was the most intense : he fixed his eyes on Samuel, from the moment when he stepped into the water until he came up out of the water ; and when the administrator plunged him under the parting waves he burst into tears, and sobbed so loud that his mother was obliged to speak to him. He was not alone ; hundreds present on this occasion were unable to hide their feelings, or check the falling tear. Indeed, it was an affecting and unusual sight, to behold one so young in life a willing convert to the religion of the Savior, and treading the path he trod, through the liquid grave. It was an example to those of his own age, and a powerful admonition to those present, who had lived to the age of manhood, and had neglected to follow the commands of the blessed Redeemer, to “go and do likewise.”

We have seen that our little inquirer was deeply affected. He told his mother, as they were returning home, that he was thinking of what she had told him concerning Jordan's stream, where the Savior was led by John to baptism; and he told her he thought this must be like it, for every body seemed so solemn. "Yes, my dear," said his mother, "it was a delightful time;" it was refreshing to the aged Christian, it was encouraging to the young convert, it was comforting to the mourner, and I hope it will be made a blessing to many a careless sinner who was present on the occasion; and I hope, my son, you will never forget it; and may the impressions you have this morning received be sanctified to your eternal good."

On the following Sabbath afternoon, the baptized candidates were received into the church, according to the usual manner, and, for the first time, had the privilege of partaking of the bread and wine, which are figurative of the broken body and the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. The house on this occasion was crowded with spectators, to

witness the reception of the candidates, who were seated in front of the pulpit, and youthful Samuel in their midst. After a discourse, about half an hour in length, the pastor came down from the pulpit, and proceeded to receive the candidates into the fellowship of the church. All eyes were fixed intently on the scene. The old and the young, the converted and unconverted, were alike interested ; solemnity was marked in every countenance, and but few eyes were dry ; indeed, who could be indifferent to such interesting exercises ? After naming the duties that devolved on every individual about to enter the church, the pastor gave to each one the right hand of fellowship, bidding them a hearty welcome to all the privileges of church membership.

When he took the hand of Samuel Rittenhouse, and made an attempt to speak, he was overcome ; there was a breathless silence through the house. After a few moments' interruption, he proceeded, in the plainest manner, and with the most parental language, as follows :

“Samuel, my dear child, although you appear young to come into the church, you are not too young to serve the Lord. You are now about to seal a promise of the most solemn nature, before the gazing eyes of this assembled multitude, and in the sight of God. I have already informed you that on entering the church you engage to perform many important duties: let me tell you, likewise, that you will have many temptations to overcome. You will have to shun the world; to watch diligently over your wicked heart, and to be careful in the choice of your companions: let me recommend you to seek the company of professing Christians, and be very punctual in your religious duties. Be a praying Christian; live near to a throne of grace. You told us, in relating your experience, that you had need of constant prayer, because you were a sinner; never forget to pray. Oh, Samuel, you are near to my heart; I feel much concerned for you. Be faithful, be diligent, be active in the service of your Master; study the Scriptures of divine truth, and set a constant watch over

your conduct. Without doing so you cannot be a consistent Christian; you will be liable to slip, and all your exertions in the cause of Christ will relax, and you may bring reproach upon that religion of which you have this day made a solemn profession in the sight of God, angels, and men. Recollect you will have many to watch your conduct; the world will watch you; and remember that the eye of God will be upon you, beholding the evil and the good you do. May you be an example of youthful piety, like Samuel of old; as you increase in years may you increase in knowledge, be an ornament to the church, and glorify God in your body and your spirit, which are his."

Charles remained with his mother until the ordinance of the Lord's supper was over. It was a season long to be remembered; many tears were shed, many hearts were softened, and many sinners convicted.

From this day Charles Singleton was a changed boy; the impressions he received were not soon to be erased from his mind. It was not a great while before he showed

by his conduct some evidences of piety which could not be misunderstood. His conversation was often directed to the love of God, his accountability to him as a sinner, and his obligations to love and serve him. He would often ask his mother questions about the Savior, and his love for sinners, that caused him to be crucified. In short, his whole conduct was changed; he read the Bible more attentively, and took more interest in prayer; and we have every reason to believe that he has already become the subject of the renewing grace of God.

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